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Camp Ossipee.



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# CAMP OSSIPÉE.

BY RALPH H. SHAW.

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TO HIS COMPANION, O. W. R.

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## CAMP OSSIPÉE.

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'Twas in the mellow light that falls  
At sunset on the mountain-walls ;  
When far and near at times is heard  
The warble of the sunset bird,  
And in the hush that deepens round  
The very soul of peace is found ;  
Where far below us Melvin Bay  
Couching itself for slumber lay,  
And over us some pine-boughs bent,—  
That, travel-worn, we pitched our tent.  
Ah ! 'twas a restful sight to see  
The wooded heights of Ossipee  
Rise round us in eternal green,  
That softer seemed at sunset seen ;  
For we had come that self-same day  
O'er glistening miles of iron way,  
And borne the dust of many a road  
That in the sun of August glowed.  
There in that peaceful hour of rest,  
Which rock and tree alike confessed,

The pine-boughs seemed above our head  
In blessing and in healing spread,  
Making us feel—who felt indeed—  
That Nature understood our need.

At length the moon rose, far and near  
We saw its tender light appear;  
Now flaring from the mountain lines,  
Now falling through their fringing pines,  
And now expanding far and wide—  
A whelming yet a gentle tide.  
Then like a brooch of silver lay,  
In its dim setting, Melvin Bay,  
Seeming, in our ecstatic sight,  
Upon the very breast of Night.  
At length all things about us slept,  
Save that the owl his vigils kept.  
We felt the mighty forest breathe  
The light touch of the dew beneath,  
And minded that if we would rise  
What time the morning tints the skies,  
We should unto our couch repair,  
We turned our wandering steps to where  
Our tent looked like a mountain-mist,  
White-sheeted, by the moonlight kissed.



Next morning—when the sun had shone  
An hour or so our landscape on!—  
We saw, forth-looking from our tent,  
With feelings of some wonderment,  
To whom the splendid sunset hour  
Had something had of glamour power,  
How far our credulous eyes had been  
Deceived the shaping moonlight in.  
Still for the light that showed the fact,  
Our view to charm us nothing lacked.  
Too far away for us to see  
One sign of its activity,  
The little thorp below us lay  
Reposeful by its sunlit bay  
As if alike were night and day.  
We only saw its houses small  
And steeple overlooking all,  
And vanes that ever and anon  
Focused the light that on them shone.

We broke our fast betimes, and took  
Our fishing-tackle to the brook,  
With good old Izaak Walton's book—  
Not that we thought our luck would be  
The better for its company,

Too obsolete in many ways  
To guide a fisher nowadays,  
But leading still to that calm mood  
Wherein to fish is meet and good.  
My friend—and no one more than he  
Enjoys its quaint simplicity—  
Had read it often, looking down  
Upon a noisy thoroughfare,  
From his high window-seat in town,  
Yet always seeming elsewhere—  
Some mountain pool pine-shadowed by  
Or meadow brook with breast of sky—  
Receiving from it what is best  
Within its gift, relief and rest.

Ah! you should have that wild brook traced  
With so much varied beauty graced;  
So rugged yet so fair, so wild  
And yet so lovely—Nature's child.  
A child whose days are full of song,  
Whose feet disport its way along,  
Who unto all its spirit gives,  
And loved of all who see it, lives.  
And so at first it seemed to be  
A thing of life, to hear and see;

To hear itself the song it sung,  
To see the woods it moved among,  
To have a subtler sense than we  
Of all that we could hear and see.  
But after all it was a brook,  
And into it we cast our hook.

We fished from pool to pool, and thought  
Of what our honest master taught,—  
That much of hope and patience need  
All fishers if they would succeed.  
But, mark you ! not without reward  
We bore our fishing-line and rod,  
Who out of hope and patience caught  
More fish indeed than we had sought.  
Ah! even with us seemed to be  
That man of "heavenly memory,"  
Who "with his Bryan and a book,  
Loitered long days near Shawford-brook,"  
In pleasant discourse, wherein we  
His singleness of heart could see,  
Inviting us to love the good,  
The meek and quiet habitude,  
To seek not more than competence,  
And thank God for his providence.

Our fishing done, our sweet meal o'er,  
We sat beside our tent's free door.  
The hour was high noon, and we heard  
But sound of leaf and song of bird;  
No clanging of a factory bell  
The stopping of the wheels to tell,  
No footsteps of a swarming throng  
A hard and dusty walk along.  
The farther mountains, wrapped in haze,  
Seemed sleeping through the August days,  
And couched in eastern luxury  
The lake's fair islands seemed to be.  
We watched, o'er land and wave below,  
The cloud-cast shadows come and go,  
Until the very landscape seemed  
Like something indistinctly dreamed,  
And lower as if farther heard  
Became the sound of leaf and bird;  
For surely had a slumberous power  
The stillness of that midday hour.

When long the lights and shadows grew  
That slanted the cool forest through,  
And from us with the westering day  
Our lighter feelings passed away,

We sought, as did the hour become,  
The threshold of a lonely home,  
A house that sadly seemed to be  
Devoted to its memory.  
As 'twere in weeded widowhood,  
How dark amid its field it stood!  
Far up upon the mountain-side,  
O'erlooking lake and valley wide,  
Where hardly ever came a sound  
Save from the sombering pines around.  
Longer the lights and shadows grew,  
Cooler the airs as touched with dew,  
While sat we in that lonely door,  
Recalling what could be no more,—  
The tender joys with childhood flown,  
The hopes by earliest manhood known,  
The long, wide way, with flowers fair,  
That ended in the path of care.  
There came to us the thought that we,  
As we had been, no more could be;  
As nevermore on us could lie  
The sunlight of our morning sky,  
So nevermore our lives could feel  
Their early freedom, early weal.

Much that that house knew, sad and lone,  
Was by our very bosoms known,  
And with a sigh of sympathy,  
We left it to its memory.

Soon in the vale below we heard  
The singing of the sunset bird,  
That in the gathering dusk was glad—  
For him the hour no sadness had—  
And casting from our minds the weight  
Of thoughts we had indulged so late,  
We gained our tent, wherein we sate  
In quiet converse till the sound  
That reached us from the lapsing rills  
And from the waving woods around,  
Lulled us to sleep among the hills.

And so we lived from day to day,  
"Exempt from public haunt" and way,  
In lightsome and in pensive thought,  
In varying moods by Nature wrought.  
Who learned that she her treasures gives  
To him who with her closely lives,  
Who comes, a quiet worshipper,  
And dares to make his home with her.









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